

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BOB INGLIS

HEARING ON

The Role of the National Science Foundation in K-12 Science and Math Education

May 3, 2006

Good morning. I want to welcome everyone, and thank you for coming to this morning's hearing on *The Role of the National Science Foundation in K-12 Science and Math Education*.

As you know, this hearing is a follow-up to the "*K-12 Science and Math Education Across the Federal Agencies*" hearing we held at the end of March. While it is always good to hear from agency witnesses on the work their respective agencies are doing, I look forward to today's testimony from our witnesses who are professionals in the field, those who are essential to preparing our students for potential careers in math and science fields. This hearing focuses specifically on NSF's role in K-12 education, and I look forward to hearing from those who share my belief that the NSF plays a unique and critical role in K-12 math and science education.

NSF is the only federal agency with a proven track record of selecting education projects through a rigorous, careful and competitive process that draws on a wide variety of experts from outside government. They have a strong track record of bringing in outsiders to evaluate the success of their programs after they are launched. In addition, they have the experience and expertise in math and science education to fully appraise proposals, to link education practice with the latest research findings in the cognitive sciences on how children learn, and to review proposals in the context of decades of experience in both education research and practice. In fact, NSF was the leading successful efforts to improve U.S. math and science education long before the Department of Education was even created.

As I recently told my Science Appropriations colleagues, while I applaud the President's desire to improve math and science education in the American Competitiveness Initiative, I am somewhat perplexed that the majority of the newly proposed programs fall within the jurisdiction of the Department of Education, when the NSF has such a vital role to play. I also remain concerned that in the FY07 budget request for NSF, the Math and Science Partnership Program continues to dwindle while more responsibility for this program is shifted to the Department of Education. The NSF is better equipped to provide a solid foundation for this program.

I am hopeful that the testimony we receive today will reflect that the NSF is best equipped to provide a solid foundation not only for programs like the Math and Science Partnership Program but also for K-12 math and science education in general.

Before introducing our esteemed panel of witnesses, however, I want to take a moment to recognize a special group in our audience today -- several of the recipients of the 2005 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. They are in Washington this week to receive their awards, and we are honored to have them with us today. They set a high standard of dedication to their profession and are exemplary of the kind of math and science teachers our nation needs to help keep us ahead of the curve on innovation and competitiveness. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their commitment, and ask that they stand so that we may know who they are.

And now, I'd like to welcome our witnesses:

Dr. Dennis Bartels is the executive director of The Exploratorium science museum in San Francisco. Before joining the Exploratorium in May 2006, he was the president of TERC, a Massachusetts-based not-for-profit education research and development organization dedicated to improving science, math, and technology teaching and learning.

Dr. Joseph Heppert is a professor and chair of chemistry and director of the Center for Science Education at the University of Kansas. He also chairs the American Chemical Society Committee on Education.

Ms. Rebecca Pringle is a physical science teacher at Susquehanna Township Middle School in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She serves on the Executive Board of the National Education Association.

Ms. Judy Snyder is a math teacher at Eastside High School in Taylors, South Carolina. She is a winner of a 2005 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

We look forward to hearing from you, and I recognize the ranking Democratic Member, Mr. Gordon, for any opening statement he may have.